



Needs Assessment

Catoosa County

Tri-State Steel Drum December 21, 1998

Introduction

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GEPD) requested that the Georgia Division of Public Health (GDPH) address public health issues associated with the Tri-State Steel Drum Company (TSSD), a permitted hazardous waste transport, storage, and treatment facility in Catoosa County, Georgia. To respond to this request, GDPH assessed the environmental health education needs of residents near the facility by evaluating information available from GEPD, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Catoosa County Health Department, and the local print media. Interviews were conducted with federal, state, and local environmental agency officials to further assess the health education needs of the residents.

Site Description and History

TSSD occupies a 90-acre tract southwest of the intersection of Julian and Graysville Roads in Graysville, Georgia. Access to the facility grounds is unlimited because a functional railroad track intersects the property near the entrance. The entrance to the site has visible no trespassing and facility identification signs, including the EPA identification number and emergency 911 address. Security fences completely surround the immediate perimeter of the hazardous waste management units limiting access to these areas. These units are also continually monitored by security guards and locked during nonoperating hours. Physical hazards that exist on-site include vehicles, machinery and equipment, and hazardous waste.

The area within a one-mile buffer of the facility is primarily agricultural, residential, and undeveloped woodland. The nearest residence is within one-quarter mile of TSSD. An elementary school and an undeveloped walking park are within one mile of the facility.

TSSD has two operations: a hazardous waste storage and treatment operation and a drum reconditioning operation. TSSD also operates a fleet of transportation vehicles, including tractor trailer rigs, for use in the transfer and/or trans-shipment of waste from a generator to TSSD and from TSSD to off-site treatment recovery,

or disposal facilities. TSSD obtained a Hazardous Waste Facility Permit from GEPD in September 1984 for the storage and treatment of hazardous waste. In addition, TSSD holds a permit from GEPD requiring control of air emissions from the drum reconditioning operation which generates a variety of hazardous and nonhazardous waste as a result of painting, blasting, caustic wash systems, and furnace operations.

In September 1998, a renewal permit application asking to increase the facility's authorized maximum storage capacity was approved by GEPD and subsequently appealed by Catoosa County.

Community Involvement Activities

To date, neither GDPH nor the Catoosa County Health Department have received inquiries from the community about the Tri-State Steel Drum facility. A public meeting was held for community discussion of the original permit application in July 1984. The majority of residents who attended the meeting stated that they were unaware hazardous waste was being stored at the facility. In August 1991 and February 1998, public hearings were held to provide a forum for residents to ask questions about the permit renewal application, and the draft renewal permit was placed on public notice. Numerous public comments were received during both public meetings and public comment periods. All comments have been addressed by GEPD. Both hearings were attended by approximately 175 people, most of whom voiced opposition to the expanded permit application.

To date, no repository has been established where people in the community can readily access information about the facility. As additional data become available, the information will be reviewed by GDPH. GDPH will also respond to all inquiries about health issues regarding the facility.

Results

The needs assessment process helps identify what community members know, do not know, and want to know. The education needs that were assessed can be divided into five categories: potential health effects, economic issues, traffic and safety,



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pollution/environmental contamination, and facility operations.

Recommendations

As additional data become available, it will be reviewed and additional requests will be responded to if received.

- A health education program should be developed by GDPH that will provide systematic learning activities that will meet identified education needs.
- If public meetings are held, GDPH and/or district health department staff should attend and document and respond to, in a timely manner, all public health concerns.
- GDPH staff should research traffic and safety issues and provide a summary of what wastes are transported, how wastes are transported, travel routes, and emergency response capacities.
- GDPH should provide the public with information about the nature and extent of contaminants in air, including the potential health effects from exposure to the contaminants of concern.
- When environmental sampling data become available, a health consultation may be provided.